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Doctors Voice Concern at Lack Of Improvement

Special to The Washington Post

LOS ANGELES, June 5—Sen. Robert F. Kennedy remained in "extremely critical" condition today from a bullet that lodged in his brain after an assassination attempt early Wednesday.

Meanwhile authorities here charged a 24-year-old Jordanian immigrant, whom they identified as Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, as Kennedy assailant. His identity was traced from the pistol used in the shooting and from fingerprints.

"No measurable improvement" was reported in the Senator's condition at a 5:15 p.m. (EDT) press conference. Surgeons acknowledged the grave danger of imminent death or serious brain injury. All but a fragment of the bullet was removed from Kennedy's brain during four hours of emergency surgery.

At 8 p.m. Washington time, a hospital bulletin reported the Senator's condition was "extremely critical as to life." His press secretary, Frank Mankiewicz, said the team of doctors was concerned at his "continuing failure to show improvement." No further regular medical bulletins were scheduled until Thursday morning.

He was gunned down at 3:20 a.m., Washington time, moments after claiming victory in California's Democratic primary.

Leaving the ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel, he went into a kitchen corridor. There he was felled—and five others hit—by a fusillade of eight .22-caliber bullets emptied from a revolver.

Sirhan was captured on the spot and then arraigned secretly.

Bail was set at $250,000 and six counts of attempt to commit murder were lodged against Sirhan. A brother, Adel Sirhan, with whom he lived in Pasadena, helped to identify the accused assailant.

Mayor Sam Yorty of Los Angeles told a news conference that the Iver Johnson pistol used in the assassination attempt—another aid in the identification process—was owned by another brother, Munier (Joe) Sirhan.

Most of the Nation had gone to sleep when Kennedy was struck down in a moment that mingled cries of horror and anger from the relatively few witnesses with the exulation of celebrating campaign workers a short distance away.

One bullet entered Kennedy's head behind the right ear and lodged in the brain. Another grazed his head. A third lodged in the back of his neck.

The news—coming, for most, with stunning unexpectedness on breakfast-time television and radio shows—had an impact that for many Americans has become all too familiar.

As with the assassination of President John F. Ken-

nedy 4½ years ago and with the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. two months ago, there were expressions of anguish, of bafflement and of fear for the country.

"There are no words equal to the horror of this tragedy," President Johnson said. He ordered the Secret Service to protect all of the presidential candidates and their families.

(Late tonight, President Johnson went on Nationwide television to make an impassioned appeal to every citizen to put an end to the never-justified violence "that tears at the fabric of our national life," and to announce the appointment of a commission to investigate what makes such violence possible in America.

The President cautioned, however, against sweeping generalizations about the nature of American society. The country's 200 million citizens, Mr. Johnson said, were not the ones who struck down President John F. Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The President said he prayed to God that Robert Kennedy be restored to health after being "senselessly and horribly stricken."

The tragedy drastically affected the nature of the presidential campaign and cast it into temporary limbo.

Sen. Eugene McCarthy, whom Kennedy defeated in the California race, asked a crowd of his stunned backers to join him in a silent prayer after he had

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been awakened to hear the news. Then he paid his respects at Good Samaritan Hospital and flew home to Washington.

Humphrey Cancels Speech

Vice President Humphrey cancelled a scheduled address at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs and said that "our hopes and prayers" are with Kennedy and the other victims of this "dreadful act of violence."

One was a Washingtonian, William Weisel, 30, of 2700 Upton st. nw., an American Broadcasting Co. unit manager. He was wounded in the left side near the abdomen and required surgery. His condition was said to be good.

The other victims, all from the Los Angeles area, were:

Paul Schrade, 43, regional manager of the United Automobile Workers and a long-time Kennedy backer. He suffered a skull fracture but was reported in good condition.

Elizabeth Evans, 43, whose skull was entered—but not penetrated—by a bullet.

Ira Goldstein, 19, an employe of Continental News Service, who suffered a bullet wound of the left hip.

Irwin Stroll, 17, wounded in the left hip.

Members of the Kennedy family joined the Senator's wife, Ethel, at Good Samaritan. They included Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, his sister, Mrs. Peter Lawford, and the late President's widow, Jacqueline Kennedy.

Throughout the day there was a procession of grief-stricken visitors to the hospital. Among them were Astronaut John Glenn, who flew to Los Angeles with six of Robert Kennedy's ten children, former CIA Chief John McCone, California Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh, the athletes who helped capture Sirhan, Rafer

Johnson and Roosevelt Grier, and Kennedy backer Pierre Salinger, former White House Press Secretary.

President Johnson phoned a message of sympathy. Vice President Humphrey, acting on a phoned request from Salinger, arranged to fly neurosurgeon James L. Poppen, a friend of the Kennedy family, from Boston to Los Angeles in an Air Force plane. To accomplish this, Humphrey had to get Air Force Chief of Staff John P. McConnell out of bed. The Vice President also arranged for an Air Force plane to airlift Glenn and the Kennedy children.

James Francis Cardinal McIntyre, Archbishop of Los Angeles, visited the hospital to convey the condolences of Pope Paul VI to the Kennedy family.

In Washington, Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who was an assistant in the Justice Department when his present post was held by Robert Kennedy, told newsmen that the FBI has been summoned into the case.

Clark said the evidence at hand was that the attempt on Kennedy's life was a lone one. "According to information that I have at the moment we have no evidence of conspiracy," he said.